

IN THE CLAIMS:

A full listing of the claims, including any amendments made by this paper, follows below:

1-15. (Canceled).

16. (Previously Presented) A method of loading containers on a marine vessel comprising the steps of:

selecting a plurality of containers adapted to contain and protect freight in a marine environment, each container having a set of outer walls defining an inner volume;

loading freight into said inner volume;

providing a vehicle including a body portion and a gripping portion including a spreader attachment, said gripping portion being capable of being raised and lowered, rotated, and inclined relative to said body portion;

individually lifting and transporting each container by means of said vehicle over a ramp to a storage deck of a marine vessel, said ramp and storage deck having sufficient strength to support said vehicle when said vehicle is transporting a fully loaded one of said containers;

positioning each container at desired locations on said deck by means of said vehicle for transportation by said marine vessel; and

securing said container to said deck at said locations.

17. (Original) The method of claim 16 wherein said securing step includes securing said containers to said deck by semiautomatic twistlocks.

18. (Original) The method of claim 17 wherein said positioning step includes the step of arranging said containers in vertical stacks on said deck.

19. (Original) The method of claim 18 wherein said securing step includes the step of securing said containers in vertical stacks to each other by means of semiautomatic twistlocks.

20. (Canceled).

21. (Original) The method of claim 20 further comprising the step of offloading said containers from said vessel at said destination site by a reach stacker vehicle.

22. (Previously Presented) A method of offloading containers from a marine vessel comprising the steps of:

selecting a plurality of containers adapted to contain and protect freight in a marine environment located on a deck of a marine vessel, each container having a set of outer walls defining an inner volume and having freight loaded therein;

providing a vehicle including a body portion and a gripping portion including a spreader attachment, said gripping portion being capable of being raised and lowered, rotated, and inclined relative to said body portion;

individually lifting and transporting each container by means of said vehicle over a ramp from a storage deck of a marine vessel, said ramp and storage deck having sufficient strength to support said vehicle when said vehicle is transporting a fully loaded one of said containers;

placing each container at desired locations on an associated dock by said vehicle.

23. (Original) The method of claim 22 further comprising the step of, prior to said lifting step, securing a ramp to a longitudinal rail on said vessel to extend to an associated dock.

24. (Canceled)

25. (Previously Presented) A method of transporting containers with a marine vessel comprising the steps of:

selecting a plurality of containers adapted to contain and protect freight in a marine environment, each container having a set of outer walls defining an inner volume and having freight loaded therein;

providing a vehicle including a body portion and a gripping portion including a spreader attachment, said gripping portion being capable of being raised and lowered, rotated, and inclined relative to said body portion;

lifting a container by means of said vehicle;

causing said vehicle to travel over a ramp to or from a storage deck of a marine vessel, said ramp and storage deck having sufficient strength to support said vehicle when said vehicle is transporting a fully loaded one of said containers;

positioning said container at a desired location on a support surface or dock by means of said vehicle; and

repeating said lifting, causing and positioning steps for each of said plurality of containers.

26. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 25 further comprising the step of releasing said container from said vehicle after said positioning step.

27. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 16 wherein each container is individually lifted and transported by said vehicle during said lifting and transporting step.

28. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 16 wherein said lifting and transporting step includes grasping each of said containers by said vehicle, and wherein the method further includes the step of releasing said containers after said positioning step.

29-31. (Canceled).

32. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 25 wherein each container includes a bottom, a roof, and a plurality of side walls extending between said bottom and said roof to thereby define said inner volume.

33. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 16 wherein said loading step includes a workman or a vehicle at least partially entering into said container to load said freight.

34. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 25 wherein said lifting, causing and positioning steps are carried out by a reach stacker.

35. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 25 further comprising the steps of securing said containers to said support surface at said locations, and towing said marine vessel with said containers secured to said support surface thereof to a destination site.

36. (Canceled)

37. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 16 wherein said vehicle is a reach stacker.

38. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 16 wherein each container includes a pair of opposed receptacles, and wherein said spreader attachment is received in said receptacles during said lifting and transporting step.

39. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 16 wherein said lifting and transporting step including gripping each container at or adjacent to a top edge of each container.

40. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 16 wherein said marine vessel includes a rail extending along a deck of said ship, and wherein the method further comprising the steps of, before said lifting and transporting step, providing a ramp having a downwardly extending lip and coupling said ramp to said marine vessel such that said lip is located adjacent to and inwardly of said rail and such that said ramp extends between said vessel and a loading dock.

41. (Canceled) The method of claim 16 wherein said vehicle includes wheels which are configured to roll on a support surface when said vehicle is moved, and wherein said wheels of said vehicle are in contact with said support surface during said lifting and positioning steps.

42. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 16 wherein said lifting and positioning steps include moving said gripping portion relative to said body portion, and wherein said lifting and positioning steps are carried out without the use of any outrigger supports.

43. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 42 wherein said lifting and positioning steps include extending a boom of said vehicle.

44. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 16 wherein said vehicle does not include any outrigger supports.

45. (Canceled).

46. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 22 wherein said lifting and placing steps include moving said gripping portion relative to said body portion, and wherein said lifting and placing steps are carried out without the use of any outrigger supports.

47. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 46 wherein said lifting and placing steps include extending a boom of said vehicle.

48. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 22 wherein said vehicle does not include any outrigger supports.

49. (Canceled).

50. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 25 wherein said lifting and positioning steps include moving said gripping portion relative to said body portion, and wherein said lifting and positioning steps are carried out without the use of any outrigger supports.

51. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 50 wherein said lifting and positioning steps include extending a boom of said vehicle.

52. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 25 wherein said vehicle does not include any outrigger supports.

53. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 25 wherein said positioning step includes stacking said containers at least three containers high.

54. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 35 wherein said marine vessel includes a pointed bow to improve the efficiency of said towing step.

55. (New) The method of claim 16 wherein said storage deck has a strength sufficient to support at least about 1,750 pounds per square foot.

56. (New) The method of claim 16 wherein said marine vessel has a beam at least about $\frac{1}{4}$ of its length to provide a relatively stable marine vessel.

57. (New) The method of claim 16 wherein said ramp has a length of at least about 75 feet to reduce the angle of inclination of the ramp.

58. (New) The method of claim 16 wherein said marine vessel is a barge and has a pointed bow.

59. (New) The method of claim 22 wherein said storage deck has a strength sufficient to support at least about 1,750 pounds per square foot.

60. (New) The method of claim 22 wherein said marine vessel has a beam at least about $\frac{1}{4}$ of its length to provide a relatively stable marine vessel.

61. (New) The method of claim 22 wherein said ramp has a length of at least about 75 feet to reduce the angle of inclination of the ramp.

62. (New) The method of claim 22 wherein said marine vessel is a barge and has a pointed bow.

63. (New) The method of claim 25 wherein said storage deck has a strength sufficient to support at least about 1,750 pounds per square foot.

64. (New) The method of claim 25 wherein said marine vessel has a beam at least about $\frac{1}{4}$ of its length to provide a relatively stable marine vessel.

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65. (New) The method of claim 25 wherein said ramp has a length of at least about 75 feet to reduce the angle of inclination of the ramp.

66. (New) The method of claim 25 wherein said marine vessel is a barge and has a pointed bow.